



Artifacts Tell Six Stories of Escape



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

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For days, Jewish people across Nazi Germany experienced terror. Hundreds of innocent individuals were killed, more than 30,000 men imprisoned, and homes, businesses, and religious sites destroyed on November 9–10, 1938, an event known as Kristallnacht (the “Night of Broken Glass”). This was the first time Nazi officials made massive arrests of Jewish people specifically because they were Jews and without any other cause.

While antisemitic restrictions and violence had been a regular occurrence since the Nazi Party came to power in Germany in 1933, Kristallnacht was a distinct turning point. It signaled that Jewish people were no longer safe, and neither the public nor the police would protect them.

Although finding a destination willing to accept Jewish refugees proved very difficult, about 113,000 Jews left Germany in 1938 and 1939. Below are six stories of individuals who fled and tried to rebuild their lives with a few precious belongings or reminders of home.

A Parting Gift



USHMM, gift of Lilli Schischa Tauber; Photography: Lisa Masson for USHMM

Lilli Schischa was 11 years old in 1938 when Germany annexed Austria and Nazis took over her family's clothing store in Wiener Neustadt, a town south of Vienna.

That was just the beginning of the family's persecution. On Kristallnacht, Lilli's father, Wilhelm, was arrested and held for ten days. The family's home was ransacked, and Lilli and her mother, Johanna, were forced with other women and children to remain inside a synagogue for three days. While imprisoned, Lilli contracted scarlet fever and had to be hospitalized for six weeks. The family was forced to move to Vienna. They never returned home to retrieve their stolen possessions.

Fearing for their young child's life, Wilhelm and Johanna arranged for Lilli to travel on a Kindertransport to England. Kindertransports were rescue efforts that brought thousands of refugee children, the vast majority of them Jewish, to Great Britain from Nazi Germany.

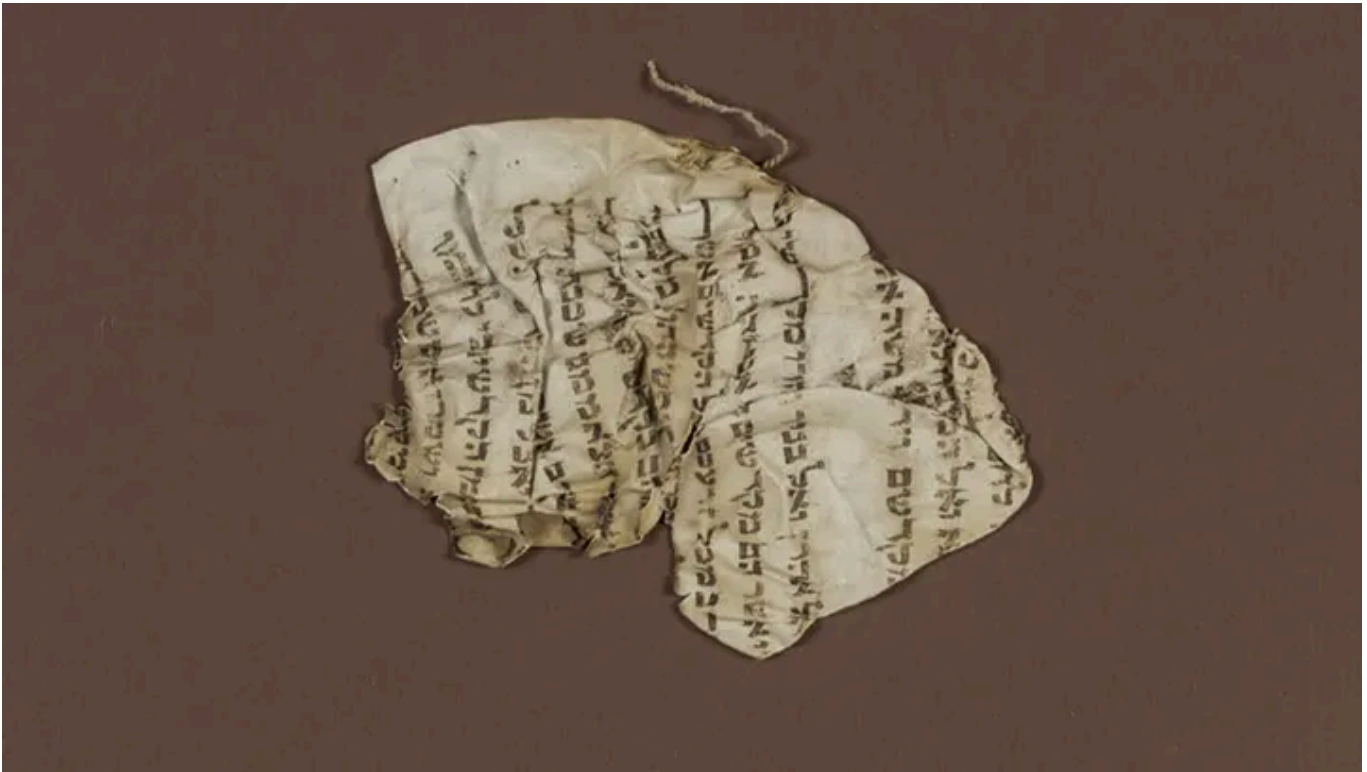
Lilli left on July 13, 1939. A sewing kit and two boxes of thread inscribed with the words “Für Die Reisezeit” (“For the Trip”) were among their last gifts to her before her parents said what would be their final good-bye. In England, Lilli was sent to live with a group of Jewish refugee girls at a hostel in London until she was evacuated to the village of Cockley Cley after World War II began. There she worked as a seamstress.



Jewish refugee girls living at a hostel in London after arriving on a Kindertransport in 1939. Lilli is pictured second from the left. USHMM, courtesy of Margarete Heller Goldberger

In February 1941, Wilhelm and Johanna were deported to the town of Opole, in German-occupied Poland. It is presumed they were killed at either the Belzec or Sobibor killing center.

Rescued from the Rubble



USHMM, gift of Max Houss

The focal point of every synagogue is the Torah. Nazis destroyed countless Torahs during Kristallnacht as they vandalized hundreds of synagogues throughout Germany. Many synagogues burned throughout the night in full view of the public and of local firefighters, who had received orders to intervene only to prevent flames from spreading to nearby buildings.

After his synagogue had been burned in Pforzheim, Germany, teenager Max Hausspiegel (later Houss) found this fragment of a desecrated Torah scroll in the rubble. He took it with him when he immigrated to the United States with his mother and four siblings in the spring of 1939.

Medical Aspirations on Hold



USHMM, gift of Martha Gay

The medical careers of siblings Berthold Salzmänn and Ernesta Spieler were temporarily cut short. They were attending medical school at the University of Vienna when Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938 and placed restrictions on Jewish life and livelihoods, including university education. They were able to graduate, but were banned from practicing medicine in Vienna or elsewhere in Nazi Germany.

After Kristallnacht, they sought a way to emigrate and pursue their professional dreams. In June 1939, Ernesta immigrated to England, where she worked as a hospital nurse before leaving for the United States in 1942.

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Berthold was selected for a refugee program organized by the Central British Fund for German Jewry and immigrated to England in early 1939. He was held at the Kitchener refugee camp in Kent, and then moved to an internment camp on the Isle of Man after the fall of France in May 1940. About a month later, Berthold immigrated to the United States. One of the siblings brought their original medical bag with them for the whole journey. Berthold and Ernesta both became physicians in the United States.

In February 1941, their sister, Josefina, and their parents, Jakob and Antonie, were deported from Vienna to the town of Kielce in German-occupied Poland, where they were then forced to live in a ghetto. When the Germans destroyed the ghetto in August 1942, they were likely among the 20,000 prisoners murdered in the Treblinka killing center.

A Glimpse of the Past



USHMM, gift of Audrey Eisenmann and Geoffrey Eisenmann

Irene Schweizer lived in Mannheim, Germany, with her husband, Friedrich. In 1936, Friedrich was fired from his job as a manager at Deutsche Bank because he was Jewish.

Two years later on Kristallnacht, two Nazis entered the Schweizers' apartment and took Friedrich away. Just before he left, Irene's mother, Jella, slipped sandwiches in his pockets. This quick thinking helped sustain him, he later recounted, because he was sent to the Dachau concentration camp and did not receive food for many days. He was held until December 1938.

A few hours after Friedrich was arrested, more Nazis came brandishing crowbars, smashed the family's furniture and dishes, and destroyed pictures on the wall. They did not harm the Swiss-owned apartment building.



Hans and Friedrich Schweizer. USHMM, gift of Audrey Eisenmann and Geoffrey Eisenmann

The family was desperate to flee Germany. Friedrich left for England in June 1939. The couple had a six-year-old son, Hans, who was deaf and attended a special school in Berlin. Irene went to his school and arranged for Hans to take a Kindertransport to England. Because of Hans's condition, Irene was given special permission to accompany him as long as she paid her own fare. Irene said she never forgot the sight of other parents sobbing as they said goodbye to their children.

The Schweizer family reunited in England and eventually moved to Chicago. Of the belongings they were able to take with them from Germany were these mother-of-pearl opera glasses, a reminder of the rich cultural life they once enjoyed before the Nazis took power.

An Olympic Hopeful Flees



USHMM, gift of Gerhard Neubeck; Photography: Lisa Masson for USHMM

Like other elite Jewish athletes in Nazi Germany, runner Gerhard Neubeck was permitted to train for the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, but only in a segregated sports facility. Before the competition, German officials made it nearly impossible for Jewish athletes to qualify for the final Olympic team, allowing just one Jewish athlete to compete in the Summer Games. This confirmed for many that the training had been a charade to appease the international community. This was just one of many cruelties Gerhard suffered under the Nazi regime.

During the November 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom, Gerhard and his father, Siegfried, were severely beaten by Nazis, who also destroyed the family's home. Along with his mother, Emmy, they soon fled to the Netherlands. On January 21, 1940, they sailed for New York aboard the SS *Westernland* and settled in Brooklyn. Gerhard brought with him his jersey and running shoes — a reminder of his Olympic dreams that were dashed.

Gerhard, who had a distinguished career as a professor in the University of Minnesota Department of Family Social Sciences, was a pioneer in the field of human sexuality, according to his obituary in the *Star Tribune*.

A Small Comfort for a “Cedar Boy”



USHMM, gift of Jack Hellman

Even before Kristallnacht, Jack Hellman and his family had experienced vicious antisemitism in their hometown of Tann, Germany. After he was attacked by a group of boys, Jack’s parents sent the nine year old to a boarding school in Frankfurt — which they hoped would provide a safer environment.

On Kristallnacht, Jack witnessed synagogues being burning and saw vandalized Jewish businesses. His parents’ store in Tann was ruined, their

car was pushed down a hill, and their apartment was looted. Jack's father was arrested and sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp.

The housemother of Jack's boarding school began reaching out to wealthy people in Great Britain to find someone who would take in the young boys under her care. She petitioned Dorothy and James de Rothschild. They agreed, and Jack and about 30 other boys left on a Kindertransport to England. He brought his teddy bear on the journey.

The boys lived comfortably on the Rothschilds' 6,000-acre estate in the village of Waddesdon and earned the nickname the "Cedar Boys." Jack personally asked James Rothschild to provide a work permit for his father, and because of it, his parents escaped to England in late August 1939, arriving just as World War II began. The family later immigrated to the United States.

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Written by United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

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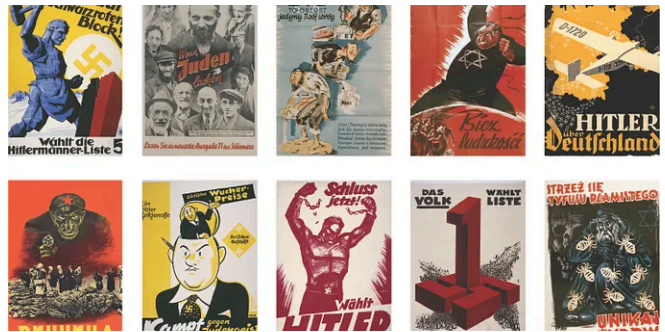
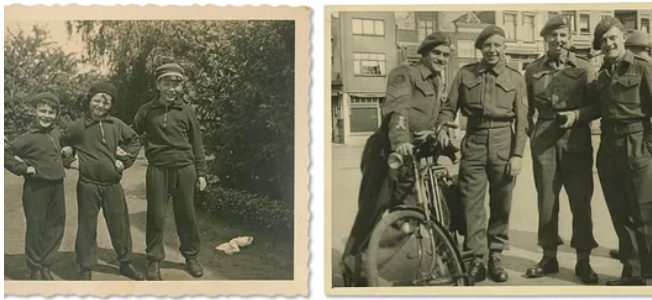




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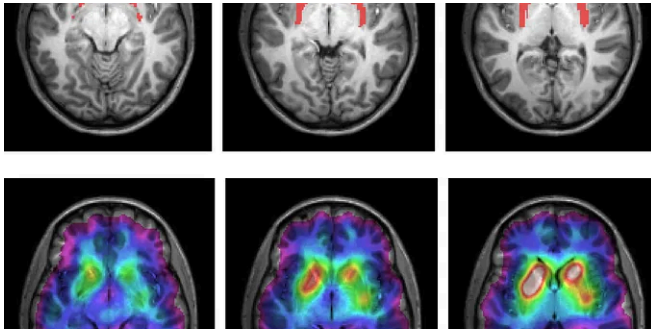


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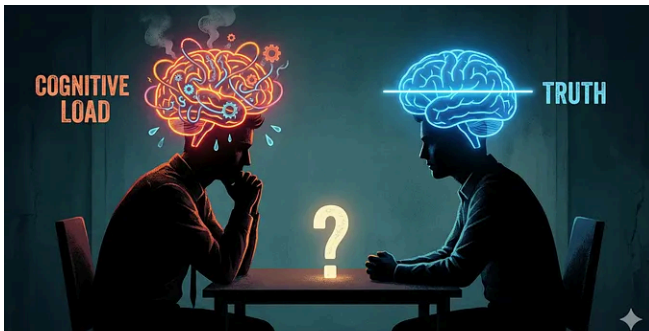


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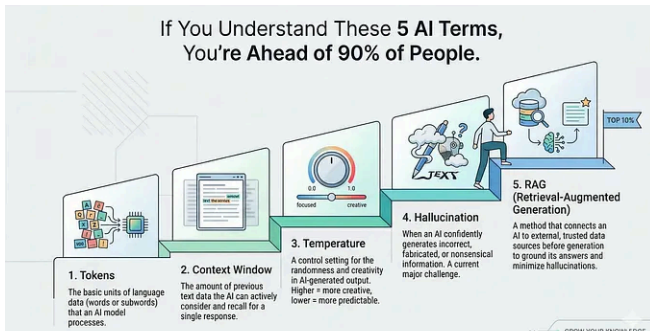
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